

Luxury Travel

Adventure Articles

Title: See the National Parks of the West by Luxury Train

Spend a week out of your life having the adventure of a lifetime. The wide open spaces of the West are yours to enjoy in a most unique way. Travel the West by the luxury vintage trains of GrandLuxe Rail and enjoy being pampered as you see the larger than life landscapes of the West such as the Grand Canyon, Bryce National Park, Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons.

Your personal porter will make your every whim a reality, and you'll dine in historic mahogany paneled dining cars and feast on five course meals. Our first meal included an appetizer of Pistachio Crusted Goat Cheese with a Honey Raspberry sauce, and the choice of entrees were: Pan Seared Chilean Sea Bass, Wild Rice Stuffed Cornish Game Hen or Grilled Ribeye served with Parmesan herb smashed Yukon Gold potatoes, sautéed asparagus finished with Marchands de Vin. "Happy hour" was made all the more pleasant in the opulent club car featuring a baby grand piano. We also enjoyed hours of watching the passing landscape atop the observation car.

The journey begins in Albuquerque, New Mexico; from there you travel to the arts Mecca of the West, Santa Fe. Feast your eyes on the exquisite Navajo rugs, handmade silver belt buckles and turquoise jewelry. One of the tour options is to visit Bandelier National Monument with its Native American ruins consisting of several thousand Ancient Pueblo cliff houses and Frijoles Canyon, which was inhabited from the 1100s to mid-1500s.

Each trip includes a "Rail Day" where you spend the day on the train, but most days you spend at your destination with several activities to choose from. The first National Park experience begins with the Grand Canyon. After an incredible breakfast aboard, we went upstairs of the observation car to listen to geologist Wayne Ranney share his knowledge of the Grand Canyon. Once we arrived, he gave us a personal tour of the South Rim, and we enjoyed him so much we purchased his book, *Carving Grand Canyon: Evidence, Theories and Mystery*. As we headed for our next destination we rode the rails at night across the desert of New Mexico. Lying in our bunk after another glorious meal aboard the GrandLuxe Rail, we contemplated the brilliant night sky of the desert as the train rocked us to sleep.

The Grand Canyon is just the beginning of your National Park Experience. Next we headed to Cedar City Utah. From there you travel by motor coach to your choice of Bryce Canyon or Zion National Parks. We chose Bryce, and found it to be even more visually awe-inspiring than the Grand Canyon if that is possible.

At Salt Lake City, we had a fabulous lunch at the beautiful Joseph Smith Memorial Building. We took advantage of the free trolley system to tour the town after lunch and

found a neat little mall within walking distance of the modern depot there, and got a Starbucks fix, while others in our group headed to Park City, Utah.

Leaving the Great Salt Lake behind, it's off to Las Vegas, where you can hit the strip, visit the Valley of Fire, or tour Hoover Dam. We chose to tour Hoover Dam, one of the greatest engineering feats of the ages because we had never seen it. We were not disappointed.

The highlight of our trip was reaching Yellowstone National Park and the Grand Tetons. It was a thrill of a lifetime to visit the steamy geysers including Old Faithful herself. A tour of the stunning Old Faithful Inn was an adventure in unto itself with its rustic exposed log and wood-frame structure and a central core seven stories high.

It's hard saying goodbye to all the wonderful staff on the train, but the last two nights of your adventure you are treated to a room at the Jackson Lake Lodge with its gripping view of the Grand Tetons. Excursions in and around Jackson Hole include a day in town, (shopping there is to die for, in a one block distance we ran into not just one, but two fur stores), a float on the Snake River, historic sites and dinner at the fabulous National Museum of Wildlife Art.

It's hard to believe that so many adventures can be packed into just one short week, but this tour aboard a vintage train does just that. Pack your bags and go.